

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0876
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA IMMEDIATE
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, SOPN, IN, US
SUBJECT: PRESS REPORTS OF HIMALAYAN MONITORING DEVICE

REF: STATE 93545

1. "THE STATESMAN" AND THE "INDIAN EXPRESS" APRIL 13 CARRY FRONT PAGE REPORTS OF THE "OUTSIDE" MAGAZINE ALLEGATION BY RICHARD COHN THAT THE CIA IN 1964 PLANTED PLUTONIUM-POWERED DEVICES IN THE INDIAN HIMALAYAS TO MONITOR CHINESE NUCLEAR TESTS. BOTH STORIES LEAD WITH FEAR THAT ONE OF THE DEVICES WHICH WAS BURIED BY AN AVALANCHE COULD POLLUTE THE HEADWATERS OF THE GANGES WITH RADIOACTIVITY. THE SAMACHAR WIRE TODAY IS CARRYING A LENGTHY REPORT OF THE "TODAY" SHOW INTERVIEW WITH HOWARD COHN, WHICH WE EXPECT WILL BE PUBLISHED TOMORROW IN THE REST OF DELHI PRESS.

2. UNDER THE HEADLINE "U.S. N-DEVICE ALLEGED ON NANDA DEVI", THE STATESMAN'S WARREN UNNA REPORTS THAT "A KEY STATE DEPARTMENT SOURCE SAID THAT, WHILE IT WAS TRUE THERE HAD LONG BEEN CHINA-WATCHING, IT ALWAYS HAS BEEN DONE IN AGREEMENT WITH THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND THAT THE MAGAZINE REPORT SEEMED HIGHLY DUBIOUS." ANOTHER DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL REPORTEDLY SAID THAT MOUNTAINEERS HAD CIRCULATED SUCH RUMOURS OVER THE YEARS BUT THEY HAD BEEN GIVEN LITTLE CREDENCE. A WHITE HOUSE SOURCE, DESCRIBED AS ONE WHO HAS FOLLOWED MILITARY AFFAIRS ON THE SUBCONTINENT FOR MANY YEARS, SAID THAT THE REPORT WAS NEWS TO

HIM. UNNA ALSO REPORTS THAT CONGRESSMEN OTTINGER AND DINGELL HAVE WRITTEN TO PRESIDENT CARTER AND AMBASSADOR PALKHIVALA SAYING THAT IF THE REPORTS ARE TRUE, A US TEAM SHOULD BE SENT TO RETRIEVE THE BURIED DEVICE BEFORE IT RUPTURED AND LEAKED POLLUTION. THE REST OF THE UNNA ARTICLE SUMMARIZED THE "OUT-SIDE" MAGAZINE SLKRY BY HOWARD COHN WHICH DESCRIBES HOW THE CIA "MOUNTAINEERS" ALLEGEDLY PLANTED THE DEVICES AFTER PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S PERMISSION HAD BEEN OBTAINED BUT WITHOUT INFORMING THE INDIAN CENTRAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION.

3. IN THE EXPRESS ARTICLE ENTITLED "CIA PLANTED DEVICE MAY POLLUTE GANGA", T.V. PARASURAM APPARENTLY DRAWS MOST OF HIS INFORMATION FROM AN NBC INTERVIEW WITH HOWARD KOHN (SIC). HE ALSO REPORTS THAT CONGRESSMAN OTTINGER HAD DEMANDED OF PRESIDENT CARTER AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CIA "CAPER". IN HIS STORY PARASURAM CONCENTRATES ON HOW A TEAM OF CRACK MOUNTAINEERS WERE ALLEGEDLY RECRUITED "WITH INDUCEMENTS OF PATRIOTISM" PLUS MONEY AND A FREE TRIP, RIGOROUSLY TRAINED IN THE US, AND FLOWN INTO INDIA WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GOI AS TO THEIR PURPOSE. THE ARTICLE QUOTES KOHN AS TELLING NBC THAT "THE CIA TOOK A VERY ARROGANT POSITION TOWARD THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT. IT DID NOT INFORM THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND TRICKED THE INDIAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCY INTO GOING ALONG WITH THE PROJECT USING DOUBLE AGENTS -- CIA AGENTS ON THE PAYROLL OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT." PARASURAM REPORTS THAT THE GOI WAS NEVER OFFICIALLY INFORMED OF THE OBJECT OF THE EXPEDITION AND THAT THE "CIA DID NOT EVEN INFORM PRESIDENT JOHNSON." PARALIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SURAM, WHO REFERS TO ONLY ONE MONITORING DEVICE THROUGHOUT HIS ARTICLE, CONCLUDED BY STATING THAT SO FAR THERE IS NOT SIGN OF ANY POLLUTION OF THE GANGES HEADWATERS BUT "FOUR PHYSICISTS SAY THAT IF THE DEVICE WERE TO CORRODE, LEAKAGE WOULD OCCUR" AND THE DEVICE SHOULD BE RETRIVED.

4. WE WILL RESPOND TO ANY INQUIRIES WITH THE STATEMENT THAT WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ABOUT THE ALLEGATION AND THAT THE DEPARTMENT IS LOOKING INTO THE MATTER. CONGENS SHOULD DO THE SAME.
GOHEEN

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